

THE WHITE HOUSE

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I want to make an announcement today concerning the question of limitations on nuclear testing, an important arms control area which has been the subject of special correspondence which I have had recently with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev, the leaders of six nations known as the New Delhi Group, and Senate Majority Leader Dole.

I have conveyed to General Secretary Gorbachev today a new, very specific and far-reaching proposal concerning nuclear testing limitations, a proposal which could be implemented immediately. In this new initiative, I urged the Soviet Union to join us without delay in bilateral discussions on finding ways to reach agreement on essential verification improvements of the Threshold Test Ban (TTBT) and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET).

In the field of nuclear testing, as in arms control generally, effective verification is a central element. It has also long been one of the most difficult problems to resolve. We are seriously concerned about the past pattern of Soviet testing as well as current verification uncertainties, and have determined that a number of Soviet tests constitute likely violations of obligations under the Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974. The inadequacy of the monitoring regime provided for in that agreement is underscored by the Soviet Union's own questions concerning the yields of particular U.S. tests, all of which in fact have been below the 150 kiloton threshold.

The U.S. places the highest priority in the nuclear testing area on finding ways of ensuring effective verification of the TTBT and PNET. I have already made several specific suggestions to the Soviet Union in this regard. My new initiative is a further attempt to build the necessary basis for confidence and cooperation between our nations regarding such limitations.

As a reflection of our resolve to make tangible progress, in my new proposal I identified to Mr. Gorbachev a specific new technical method--known as CORTEX--which we believe will enable both the US and USSR to improve verification and ensure compliance with these two treaties. This is a hydrodynamic yield measurement technique that measures the propagation of the underground shock wave from a nuclear explosion. I provided to Mr. Gorbachev a technical description of CORTEX designed to demonstrate how this method will enhance verification procedures.

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To allow the Soviet Union to examine the CORRTEx system more fully, I further proposed that Mr. Gorbachev send his scientists to our Nevada test site during the third week of April, 1986. At that time, they could also monitor a planned US nuclear weapons test. I would hope this would provide an opportunity for our experts to discuss verification methods and thus pave the way for resolving the serious concerns which have arisen in this area.

In making this offer, I made clear to General Secretary Gorbachev that if we could reach agreement on the use of an effective verification system incorporating such a method to verify the TTBT, I would be prepared to move forward on ratification of both the TTBT and PNET.

What is unique about this new initiative is its specificity and concreteness, and the detailed new technical information we have provided to the Soviet Union in trying to solve these verification uncertainties. It is important that the Soviet Union engage with us now in this first practical step to improve the confidence we each must have in treaty compliance with the 150 kiloton threshold on underground tests. If this can be achieved, we believe we will have significantly improved the prospects for verifying other arms control agreements as well through improved verification regimes.

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